money in Languedoc at the preposterous rate of 266| per cent.[1] In Italy, indeed, one reason why the Jews were often summoned to open a loan-bank was that the local money-lenders had become too extortionate.

Thus the Jews were admitted to Todi, in Umbria, only when the normal rate of interest had reached a shattering figure. In Brindisi, the poor burghers had good reason to rejoice when the Jews were authorised to lend money at the rate of 40 per cent, as otherwise they "would have been forced to sell their belongings at vile price"; and after the latter's expulsion, the rate of interest charged by the Christian usurers rose to 240 per cent.

Sometimes, it was notorious that the Jews were mere decoys, acting for the Christian capitalists behind the scenes. Joseph Sessa, an anti-Semitic Italian jurist of the eighteenth century, gives reluctant testimony to this fact. He writes: "A majority of the sums lent by the Jews to Christians at an interest of 18 per cent, whether on security or otherwise, are advanced to the Jews themselves by Christians. The latter ordinarily retain the pledge, in order to safeguard themselves, sharing in the Jewish usury to the extent of eight, ten, or even twelve per cent. These facts have often been laid bare, and continue to be daily."[2] An even more astonishing commentary upon the state of affairs is provided by contemporary documents from Italy, from Poland and from the south of France,

which demonstrate that the poverty-stricken Jewish com* munities were forced to have recourse for loans, at an

[1] The author may be excused for quoting once more the expressive words of Geoffrey of Paris:

"For the Jews were debonair,
Greatly more, in this affair,
Than now the Christians are."

[2] So too at Nuremberg, over the period 1304-7, we find the Christian firm of Holzschuher lending money to Jews at a virulent rate of interest, apparently going as high as 220 per cent.